



MARYLAND HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL VOLUNTEER CORPS

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

October 2004

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Governor

Michael S. Steele
Lt. Governor

S. Anthony McCann
Secretary

Diane Matuszak,
*Acting Deputy Secretary for
Public Health Services*

Vision

Providing volunteers to ensure quality health care to the citizens of Maryland in an emergency.

Mission Statement

Maryland Health Care Professional Volunteers Corps consists of health care professionals working together to provide emergency care for the citizens of Maryland by responding to catastrophic events throughout the state of Maryland.

DHMH, Emergency Preparedness and Response

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FROM THE DESK OF ARLENE H. STEPHENSON, *Former Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services*

Welcome to your first edition of the Maryland Health Care Professional Volunteer Corps newsletter. Maryland has had great success in achieving our goals toward emergency preparedness and response. In fact, we have been recognized by both the Trust for America's Health and by the Harvard School of Public Health as being the number one state in the nation! You are a very big part of making that possible. We now have over 4,000 licensed professionals who have volunteered to be a member of our Health Care Professional Volunteer Corps. Maryland has more volunteers than Illinois and New York City. I believe that speaks to the hearts of Marylanders and to the great work being done by our licensing boards. The vast majority of you has already been through the training courses and is ready, willing and able to help should we ever need to call on you.

I have two requests to make of you. First,

if you have not completed your training through your licensing board or participated in state-sponsored drills with local health departments, please contact your state licensing board. It is critical that you have the best possible understanding of your role in an emergency and that you know how to work with your team. Also, please keep your 24-hour contact information current with your professional licensing board so they may continue to know how to reach you quickly.

Volunteers have been the rays of sunshine in our emergency preparedness activities. As we continue to refine our plans and test them, we are constantly reminded that there are many people in the world who are working just as hard but with the intention of harming us. It is a relief to know that there are many more people with good hearts, who are working to help us.

You have our thanks and our admiration! ■

BOARD OF NURSING

The Board of Nursing currently has 2,071 nurses in the volunteer database with 950 trained and credentialed. During the training sessions nurses are given an overview of disaster and weapons of mass destruction events, legal implications and the activities of state Government in homeland security. They are also oriented to the various roles that a nurse may play in an event. At the time of an event, the nurses will be oriented to the specific assignment. The sessions also include smallpox immunization training along with a discussion of mass immunization activities.

Two drills demonstrated that the board of Nursing needs an improved call-out procedure that would more rapidly get

the information to each nurse volunteer. All nurse volunteers will be receiving a form asking for additional information. This information will remain confidential and will be used only by the board to contact volunteers in an emergency. It is hoped the board can use the information to improve communication.

The Board of Nursing Web site (www.mbon.org) contains information about upcoming classes, programs and general information for the nurse volunteers. It is suggested that nurses check the Web site periodically for new information and training opportunities. The Board of Nursing wants to say thank you to all of the nurses for volunteering to assist in emergencies. ■

MARYLAND BOARD OF PHYSICIAN CORPS IN ACTION!

Hurricane Charley, which hit southern Florida in mid-August, gave us a real-life opportunity to use the volunteer physician network that the Board of Physicians has developed. Early the morning of August 14th a request came in to the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) for nurses, physicians, and pharmacists willing to deploy to Florida.

The Maryland Physician Volunteer Corps volunteers were contacted by e-mail to determine their willingness and ability to

go to south Florida to help cope with the disaster. Within the hour, six volunteers indicated their willingness to go; by the end of the day, almost 50 positive responses were received. Fortunately, it was not necessary to send the Maryland volunteers, but it was a wonderful opportunity to test our system. Thanks to all of you who responded to the request and to Ms. Christine Triplett of the board staff who spent her Saturday coordinating the response.

Also, thanks to all of the volunteers who participat-

ed in the disaster drills conducted on June 8 and 9 when the board responded to eight separate drill calls for volunteers to serve in seven Maryland counties. Thirty-nine physicians and three physician assistant volunteers responded in the allotted timeframe. The following e-mail message that was received on June 10 conveyed the impression of one of the participating county health departments.

Christine, I did not respond, as I was a member of the Public Health Emergency Preparedness

Team at Baltimore County participating in this bioterrorism drill. I was very impressed with the number of (fellow) Physician Volunteers who phoned our health department at your request and offered 'virtual' assistance. The program seems to be working. Congratulations! From Deborah Eichelberger, MD MPH, Director, Bureau of Disease Control.

Visit our Web site for upcoming training programs at www.mbp.state.md.us or call 410-764-4780. ■

MARYLAND PHARMACIST VOLUNTEER CORPS

A Must For Those Willing to Provide Pharmaceutical Services During a Catastrophic Event!

At the request of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), the Maryland Board of Pharmacy appointed a Bioterrorism and Emergency Preparedness Task Force to develop plans for recruiting and training Maryland-licensed volunteer pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to respond to state emergencies and catastrophic events. Demonstrating its commitment to ensuring that volunteers are continually available and supported, the board subsequently made the Task Force one of its permanent standing committees.

During the first training held September 2002, Arlene Stephenson, former Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services, thanked volunteers for answering the state's request for assistance and officially designated the more than 250 volunteers as members of the "Maryland Pharmacist Volunteer Corps (MPVC)." The Board designated 35 liaisons from among the MPVC to work closely with local health departments (LHD) to develop emergency plans. In addition, more than 160 team leaders have also been selected from the MPVC to assist the LHD designees in the operation of local treatment centers during an actual event.

Training is a must for those willing to provide pharmaceutical services during an emergency or catastrophic event. To date, the board, in collaboration with DHMH, the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, and the Maryland Poison Control Center, has recruited 1,030 volunteers, of which more than 500 have been trained during eight training programs offered throughout Maryland. The board has also participated in three statewide drills.

The board continues to recruit, train, and engage volunteers in drills and exercises throughout the state and looks forward to

continued support from MPVC volunteers. Trained pharmacists and pharmacy technicians will insure preparedness to provide state and local support when called upon. Volunteers are encouraged to keep current contact information on file with the board. For more information on how to join or to train for the Maryland Pharmacist Volunteer Corps, or to update contact information, contact Ms. Joan Lawrence, MPVC Program Coordinator by e-mail: RxEmergency@dhmh.state.md.us

Kudos to the Maryland Pharmacist Volunteer Corps! ■

MENTAL HYGIENE ADMINISTRATION

(Boards: Social Work, Professional Counselors, Psychology)

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DHMH) Mental Hygiene Administration (MHA) continues to recruit volunteer behavioral health crisis counselors to be members of the state's emergency preparedness and response team. Events such as terrorist attacks, La Plata Tornado, the sniper attacks, and Tropical Storm Isabel have affected many of the state's residents in recent years. The support and educational services provided by the

behavioral health community to those impacted has been a central element of healing and building resiliency.

Following significant crisis, a range of non-pathological stress responses may be evidenced by those impacted. Although expected, these reactions may be extremely distressing for victims and survivors. In some cases, they may temporarily impair the ability of some individuals to manage complex tasks related to accessing tangible and financial resources. "The volunteers will help us

provide essential services in urgent times of need," said former DHMH Secretary Nelson J. Sabatini. "We are very fortunate to have extremely talented and dedicated professionals, both in the public and private sector, and we are confident that many are willing to contribute to our emergency response efforts."

Newly recruited, licensed behavioral health care professionals will continue to receive training and be added to a central database. When needed, their boards, through e-mail, telephone

calls or via local media, will contact volunteers. Current volunteers will also be notified of opportunities to participate in drills and exercises to enhance their understanding of emergency and disaster events. Continuing education opportunities are also in development. Volunteers will receive information and updates via the volunteer newsletter, e-mail, and mailings. For more information, please contact Rachel Kaul or Jenny Howes at 410-724-3235 or kaulr@dhmh.state.md.us or howesj@dhmh.state.md.us. ■

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(Questions & Answers about Bioterrorism)

In the days following the terrorist attacks of September 11, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) has received questions about bioterrorism from many Maryland citizens. As part of its continuing program to respond to bioterrorism and other health threats, DHMH has prepared this summary of current recommendations about certain issues that concern the public. In particular, here are answers to several recent questions:

Q: Should I be vaccinated against anthrax?

No. Routine vaccination against anthrax is not recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. The existing national stockpile of anthrax vaccine is limited, and will be directed for use in the event of an acute need. Currently anthrax vaccination is recommended only for the following people who are the most likely to be exposed to anthrax:

1. Persons who work directly with the organism in the laboratory;
2. Persons who handle potentially infected animal products; and
3. Certain military personnel deployed to areas of the world with high risk for exposure to the organism.

Q: Should I be vaccinated against smallpox?

No. Routine smallpox vaccination is not recommended by the CDC. The existing national stockpile of smallpox vaccine is limited, and will be directed for use as appropriate (e.g., in controlling an outbreak). However, there is no evidence at this time that anyone has been exposed to smallpox.

Q: Should I be taking preventive antibiotics?

No. CDC or other public health authorities do not currently recommend preventive antibiotics. If you have any reason to believe that you might have been exposed to an infectious disease, contact your health care provider.

RELATED LINKS

Emergency Preparedness Information Resources (as of September 2004)

National:

- www.bt.cd.gov
- <http://ndms.dhhs.gov/>
- <http://www.whitehouse.gov/homeland/>
- <http://www.usamriid.army.mil/education/bluebook.html>
- <http://www.upmcpbiosecurity.org>
- <http://www.naccho.org/project90.cfm>
- <http://mailman.hs.columbia.edu/CPHP/resources.html>
- <http://www.apic.org/bioterror/>
- <http://www.redcross.org/pubs/dspubs/terrorformat.html>
- <http://www.homelandsecurity.org/>
- <http://www.cns.miis.edu/research/terror.htm>
- <http://www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/bioterr.html>
- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/bioterror/>

State:

- <http://bioterrorism.dhmh.state.md.us>

September is National Preparedness Month

Maryland Homeland Security encourages Marylanders to take simple steps to prepare themselves and their families for any possible emergencies. For more information visit Web site: <http://www.ready.gov/>

Contribute Your Ideas

This newsletter is created to keep you informed, and to cover topics that are of interest to you. If there is a particular topic that would be helpful to you, let us know.

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The Department, in compliance with the Americans and Disabilities Act, ensures that qualified individuals with disabilities are given an opportunity to participate in and benefit from DHMH services, programs, benefits, and employment opportunities.

Maryland State Alert System

Maryland State Alert System is a five-tier system developed to alert local authorities and citizens of increases in the threat of terrorist attack. Paralleling the Homeland Security Advisory System, it complements the national alert level, and based on local assessments may be higher (but never lower) than the national level. During periods of heightened threat, citizens should be alert for further guidance on the nature of the threat and recommended individual protective measures.

Threat Levels:

Low Condition (Green). This condition is declared when there is a low risk of terrorist attacks.

Guarded Condition (Blue). This condition is declared when there is a general risk of terrorist attacks.

Elevated Condition (Yellow). An Elevated Condition is declared when there is a significant risk of terrorist attacks.

High Condition (Orange). A High Condition is declared when there is a high risk of terrorist attacks.

Severe Condition (Red). A Severe Condition reflects a severe risk of terrorist attacks. Under most circumstances, the protective measures for a Severe Condition are not intended to be sustained for substantial periods of time. ■

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